

Submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

Submitted by: WIZO Victoria (Women's International Zionist Organisation)

Date: June 2026

Deadline for Submissions: June 14 2026

WIZO Victoria is a division of WIZO Australia. WIZO Australia has already presented a submission, however, WIZO Victoria feels the need to supplement their submission with the local experience of our members and community within Victoria. WIZO Victoria has a membership of over 1,000 women and is part of an international membership of over 250,000.

WIZO Victoria is a women's organisation dedicated to strengthening Israeli society as well as supporting our local community through volunteer, educational and charitable initiatives. We have witnessed firsthand the impact of antisemitism and antizionism towards our members, their families and the broader community. We have now found our focus has had to change and we feel the need to look after the welfare of our members, especially those experiencing antisemitism.

There are several ways in which we have been affected:

1. Increased anxiety of our members attending functions or events due to the visual presence of elevated security (which adds to the cost of our events).
2. The reluctance and fear to wear Jewish symbols such as the Star of David and skullcaps in public.
3. Experiencing online harassment.
4. We are unable to advertise the location of our events due to security and the fear of demonstrations. We need to scrutinize our guest lists very carefully – something we did not do before October 7, 2023. Working closely with our Community Security Group (CSG) as well as with Victoria Police.
5. Whenever WIZO Victoria holds an event, we have a security guard located outside the premises. We often require more security guards depending on the numbers.

6. WIZO Victoria must now always inform the CSG, the Jewish security group established 20 years ago to fulfill the security risks and needs of the Jewish community.
7. Our Jewish Centre (Beth Weizmann) where we have our offices, has security and additional bollards. One cannot enter without strict screening and only one person at a time.
8. WIZO Victoria operates a community Opportunity shop, providing clothing and goods for people of City of Glen Eira and Port Phillip. We cannot display that we are a Jewish organisation for fear that we may be targeted and place our volunteers in danger.

WIZO Victoria holds official status with UNAA Women's Division of the UN as follows:

- **ECOSOC Status:** WIZO is recognised as an NGO with Special Consultative Status by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- **UNICEF Status:** WIZO also holds official consultative status with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In line with this status, we attend monthly meetings with women from various Non-Jewish Women's Organisations who are also part of UNAA. These include the National Association of Women and the Country Women's Association.

These meetings are critical as we want to educate and encourage positive relationships so that our Jewish women are highly upheld. We feel this is a step to prevent antisemitism. Inclusion with the UNAA is also important as well, as the United Nations stands for human rights, dignity and the protection of all women and girls globally. They also uphold principles of impartiality, accountability and moral clarity.

However, since October 7, WIZO Victoria and other Jewish women's organisations have felt let down by the UNAA.

Each month we spoke about the atrocities, rape and murder of young women asking the UNAA for moral support and acknowledgement that these were war crimes and are unacceptable. For over two years there has been silence from these women's organisations. The silence was, and still is, "deafening".

On December 10 2024, International UN Human Rights Day, Jewish women from all over the nation, came together on the steps of Parliament. They were wearing yellow ribbons to represent peace, to stand up for the equal rights of Jewish women and to be acknowledged for the rape, murder and atrocities of October 7. It was also a plea for the Australian Government and community to stand up against hate and antisemitism. By this stage, more than a year had passed, and the Jewish community was already acutely aware of the escalating antisemitism. We wanted the Government to recognise the seriousness of this threat as well.

Another example of the “deafness” was the annual UN International Women’s Day lunch. March 7, 2025. The keynote speaker was the Irish Prime Minister Mary Robinson. She is well known for her Anti-Jewish stance.

This upset all the Jewish Women’s organisations who refused to attend. We would have hoped that after the October 7 massacre, it would have been appropriate and more sensitive for them to highlight a Jewish speaker such as Linda Dessau (the 29th Governor General of Victoria).

To counter this, and to support our own community, WIZO Victoria and a number of other Jewish Women’s Organisations, felt we had to hold our own event. This was held in the Catani Gardens and 200 of our community, celebrated our resilience and solidarity. Several politicians and artists were featured, and of course, in the planning of the event, we had to consult with the CSG, our peak Jewish security body, to ensure our safety while we were present.

This year, the UNAA chose Grace Tame as their keynote speaker. Yet again we felt let down as she was well known in the wider community for her anti-Israel stance and we felt, once again, we could not attend. She was selected to be a role model and yet, we know after her attendance at a rally recently, she has demonstrated that she provokes antisemitism, antizionism and violence.

This was soon after Bondi and WIZO Victoria felt that her inclusion undermined the United Nations credibility and alienated Jewish women, for whom the United Nations is supposedly representing a refuge.

WIZO Victoria, post October 7, wrote letters to various Non- Government Organisations reaching out for support, but it never eventuated.

WIZO Victoria respectfully recommend the Royal Commission consider:

1. Recognize the rampant antisemitism sweeping through our society and stand up vocally to counter it from our corporate leaders, sporting groups, civil and women's organisations.
2. Provide a safer environment at all our tertiary institutions and places of learning for Jewish students, and they not to be subjected to exclusion and violence.
3. Harassment online be taken seriously by strengthening laws and enforcing mechanisms to eradicate such unwanted issues.
4. Provide support for organisations facing extraordinary security costs because of religiously motivated threats.
5. Encourage publicly funded organisations to promote genuine social cohesion by fostering respectful dialogue and rejecting all forms of racial and religious hatred.
6. Establish mechanisms to monitor and report incidents of antisemitism to ensure accurate data collection and accountability.
7. Celebrate Jewish artists with inclusion in community, industry and festival events rather than being subjected to exclusion, harassment and even death threats.
8. Have Australian Organisations act as agents of social cohesion and have the moral courage to stand up to all forms of hatred, especially antisemitism and antizionism.

Conclusion

WIZO Victoria remains committed to fighting against all forms of bigotry. WIZO Victoria advocates for a society where all Australians can live with dignity, fairness, and safety.

WIZO Victoria urges the Royal Commission to make strong and practical recommendations that restore safety, inclusion and confidence for Jewish Australians and strengthen social cohesion for all Australians.

This is not only a Jewish issue. It is an Australian issue that goes to the heart of equality, mutual respect and democratic values.

WIZO Victoria trusts the Royal Commission will act decisively to ensure that the "normalization" of antisemitism in Australia is reversed.

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